RAJYASABHA

Tuesday, the14th May, 2002/24 *Vaisakha,* 1924 *(Saka)*

The House met at eleven of the clock,

MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Visa-on-arrival Scheme

*681. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the Hindustan Times dated the 12th April, 2002, to the effect that the "visa-on-arrival scheme" announced to be operational from 1st April, 2002, is likely to be delayed considerably due to various constraints and differences in perception of concerned Ministries, like Home Affairs, Civil Aviation, etc.; and

(b) if so, the details of difficulties being encountered and the steps taken to remove the bottlenecks so as to implement the scheme in a time-bound manner to boost the sagging tourism industry?

THE MINISTER OFTOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government has decided not to introduce the scheme at present due to current security environment.

SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Sir, I have two supplementaries. Firstly, I want to know why the Home Ministry has not given you permission.

Secondly, if you allow, without visa, people to come in, Is there any possibility that undesirable people will come in?

SHRI JAGMOHAN: So far as the first question is concerned, it is the assessment of the Home Ministry, which is based on intelligence reports and other inputs from various agencies. So far as the second issue is concerned, if everybody is allowed to come in, it creates a lot of problem. If undersirable elements come in, you have to send them back. How will they go back? Therefore, the original scheme was also restricted to selected countries. But, because the WorldTrade Centre attack, because of the attack on Parliament itself, because of

what is happening in other parts of the country, which we very well know, and the general security environment all around, the Home Ministry thought that it was not the opportune time to introduce this scheme now. We also have the same assessment now. We agree with the Home Ministry's assessment and that is why we have deferred the scheme. We are not saying that the scheme will not be introduced. We are hoping that the security environment would improve and then this scheme would be introduced as an experimental measure for about 20 countries, and from two airports, Mumbai and Delhi.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a second supplementary?

SHRI R.P. GOENKA: May I put another question, Sir?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

SHRI R.P. GOENKA: You say that you would be allowing from Mumbai and Delhi Airports. Some newspapers report that Mumbai and Delhi Airports would be privatised. So, will they be able to follow the same strict rules as you propose?

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Privatisation or non-privatisation of the airports has nothing to do with it. It is a question of whether 'visa-on-arrival' would be given or not. That visa is given by the Ministry of External Affairs. It is a Government prerogative. So, the Government will have to make up its mind whether to allow 'visa-on-arrival' or not.

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: Sir, there was a provision that 'visa-on-arrival' would be given to the children of the people of Indian origin up to the age of 16 years. In many cases, people of Indian origin come to India with children less than the age of 16 years. Earlier, the decision was that visa would be issued to the accompanying children of the parents, for a tenure of six months, on arrival at Indian airports from abroad. I am told, that facility has also been withdrawn, creating a lot of problems to the people of Indian origin from abroad. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is aware of this fact; and, if so, would take effective steps to see that, at least, the people of Indian origin are not embarrassed. Will he think of reviving it?

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Sir, so far as 'visa-on-arrival' scheme is concerned, it is a part of the Tourism Promotion Scheme. It has nothing to do with the general scheme of issue of passport and visa. We will convey to the Ministry of External Affairs that these are the suggestions made by the hon. Member so that they could take appropriate decision. So far as we are concerned, we are concerned with the scheme of 'visa on arrival', purely from the point of view of tourism promotion.

SHRINARENDRA MOHAN: Sir, this question also relates to the boosting of the sagging tourism industry. I think the hon. Minister would agree that, in India, tourism industry is going down, may be, for various reasons, while the international tourism is on the increase. In the South-East Asian countries, where Indian culture is prevalent, the tourism industry has grown very much. Similarly, though India is having a number of Buddhist centres, people from countries, like Japan and other Buddhist countries, are not favouring India as a tourist destination. What are the reasons? What is the Government going to do to improve the sagging tourism industry?

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Sir, as far as this question is concerned, it is a very valid question as to why Indian tourism has not advanced as much as it could have. I would concede that there is a lot of difference between the potential and the performance. Now, it is a civilizational issue. For the last 20 years, the Indian tourist traffic, compared to the world tourist traffic, has remained static at 0.38 per cent of the world tourist traffic. There are many reasons for it. These reasons have now been met in our new Tourism Policy which I had placed before this august House only the other day. I would like to underline one point, that is, tourism is not an issue which is the concern of the Tourism Ministry or the Culture Ministry alone. It is, basicaUy, a civilizational issue—when a tourist comes to Delhi, how he is being dealt with by the porter; how he is being dealt with by the taxiwala; how he is being dealt with by the policemen; what type of a city we present to him, whether it is a dirty city or a clean city; whether we are organised people or disorganised people; whether there are slums around our archaeological monuments or not. These are the areas which we wish to tackle and this is what we are trying to do.under the new Tourism Policy. Fourteen new points have been added. We are very keen that there should be effective linkages between the archaeological management and our tourism, between our civil aviation and tourism, and between the civic reforms and tourism. It is an issue which is much larger that what we can conceive of. Purely from the point of view of tourism, we have to improve our life; we have to improve our value-system. What I say is, a sort of Indian cultural and religious addition is also required, if we want to attract the potential tourists. I would like to inform the hon. Member that we have started a very novel scheme, as you have seen in the case of Vaishno Devi. In the case of Ajanta-Ellora, we have a very big scheme. We have a very big scheme for Humpi which will attract, I am quite sure, in times to come, lakhs and lakhs of tourists. A large number of new schemes have been started in Ajanta, Mahabalipuram, Jaisalmer, etc., which will cover a much larger area than the small monuments or so. It is being done in the whole of Kurukshetra; it is being done at Thaneshwar. The Finance Minister, who is

sitting here, is very kind to us. He is now treating the Tourism Department not only as a foreign-exchange-earner, but also as an instrument for removal of poverty, as an instrument which will ensure equity; as an instrument which will bring about balanced development of regions and the country; as an instrument for preserving our cultural heritage and so on. He has been kind enough to increase our Budget allocation from Rs. 150 crores to Rs. 225 crores. Our plan allocation has also been increased from Rs. 600 crores to Rs. 2,900 crores; five to six times more because of the projections that we have placed before the Planning Commission and the Finance Ministry. They know that this is a smokeless industry and we can create a lot of employment out of it. If one million is invested in the tourism industry, we get 47 jobs. If one million is invested in an ordinary industry, we get only 10 or 12 jobs. But, we are quite aware of our shortcomings. We are trying to meet those shortcomings through a new drive. We are trying to launch new schemes in this field. I am quite sure that in times to come we will get good results, although the overall security environment is not in our favour because of the attack on the WTC and because of what is happening in Europe, Middle East and other places. People from other countries are not travelling too much. Neither are they coming to India nor are they going elsewhere. But we hope to make up and we are going to improve our domestic tourism tremendously.

SHRIN ARENDRA MOHAN: Sir, I have tried to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the Buddhist shrines. What has the Minister to say in this regard?

SHRI JAGMOHAN: If the hon. Member wants details about the Buddhist shrines, I can give it. The Ajanta-Ellora is a Buddhist shrine. So far as Bodh Gaya is concerned, we are taking up a very big project costing more than Rs. 1,000 crores. Roads are already under construction. We are spending crores of Rupees at the Jain monument and the Buddhist sites in Uttar Pradesh. There is going to be a big boost to the Buddhist tourist centres. We have assessed the schemes. We have drawn up a scheme in regard to Bodh Gaya. It is already on. We have improved the city itself. We have given Rs. 38 crores for the construction of roads. Many other projects have already been started in this area.

DR.T. SUBBARAMIREDDY: Sir, after the 11th September, attack on the World Trade Centre, we all know that tourism has gone down considerably. One of the ways through which the Government of India thought that they would be able to encourage tourism was the introduction of the scheme of 'visa-on-arrival'. He has given a blunt answer, "the Government has decided not to introduce the scheme at present due to current security environment." This is not fair. We all agree so far as the current security environment is concerned.

But there should be some effective efforts also. If people come from Pakistan and other countries, we might face some security problems. But if people come from countries like Japan and other Asian countries, which are very friendly towards India, why don't we make efforts to improve tourism phase-wise? But the Minister bluntly says, "No." The scheme of visa-on-arrival is a good idea. Why don't you make efforts to improve tourism phase-wise? Secondly, in the whole world the tourism is going up. The Minister has that in India it is going down. I agree with him. We should make efforts to improve tourism. Sir, he is a man who has always been in the news. But under his leadership also nothing has improved. Nothing has improved in the last five years. Now also nothing is happening. The Government should take some concrete steps. They are saying that they have increased the Budget allocation. It is not enough. It is just one aspect. There are so many other ways through which you can increase the prospects of tourism in India. What concrete steps is the Government taking in this regard?

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Sir, let me take this question from the other side. I have given all the concrete plans about which 1 am talking. I have talked about the Buddhist Circuit at Bodh Gaya. I have talked about Ajanta-Ellora. I have talked about Varanasi. I have talked about Mahabalipuram, Humpi and Jaisalmer. These are all concrete plans. We are doing it in each State.These are the concrete schemes and projects where the work has already been started. He is talking of the past. I do not want to go into the last 20 years and why tourism has not picked up to the extent it should have picked up and so on. We are confident that with all the efforts that have now been made, we will improve our performance tremendously.

DR. T. SUBBARAM1 REDDY: Sir, he has not answered my question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Ekanath K.Thakur.

DR.T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: I have asked about phase-wise efforts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, no. Shri EkanathThakur.

SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Sir, 1 thank the Minister for the insight he has provided on the efforts that he is making. As an international tourist, 1 would like to say here that one of the things that inhibits the growth of international tourism and arrival of international tourists in India is the non-availability of safe and potable drinking water. International tourists, when they come to India, have the fear of contracting diarrhoea and, hence, they have to go in for mineral water from other sources. When we go to the other countries of the world, we have a clear instruction that it is safe to drink water from the taps, even those in

bathrooms and toilets. But, here, in India, we cannot drink the water that is provided by the hotels. Now, unless we provide safe, potable, drinking water in our hotels, how do we expect the tourists from abroad to arrive here in large numbers? What is the Minister doing about it? Along with this, I would like to say that in my district, the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra, 50 per cent of the population has migrated to cities like Mumbai, Pune, Kolhapur, Sholapur, so on and so forth. So, 50 per cent of the houses are lying unoccupied. Sir, all that the domestic tourists require, as I mentioned, is safe drinking water and a clean toilet. These houses are in the natural habitat and are in the very lap of Mother Nature. This area is rich in flora and fauna; and if these are developed, domestic tourism will witness a boom and prosper. So, some imaginative steps have to be taken in certain areas. Sindhudurg is adjacent to Goa... .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Put a pointed supplementary.

SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Sir, my supplementary is this. What is being done to promote tourism internally? For example, in the Sindhudurg district, which is near to Goa, the same number of tourists, which comes to Goa, can be attracted to this place.

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Sir, I have already explained this. We are giving special emphasis on domestic tourism. Our policy is to promote domestic tourism, create infrastructure which, in turn, can become a backbone for international tourism. And, in the areas which I have referred to, safe drinking water is being provided. For example, when we are talking of Ajanta-Ellora, within an area of two kilometres, all types of facilities like drinking water facilities, staying facilities, eating facilities, all of modern and high class standards, are being provided. To give a clean environment, trees have been planted. All aspects of environment, ecology, culture and sanitation, have simultaneously been taken car- of. Now, if you go to Ajanta Ellora,—I am prepared to show you a film on this—you can see what transformation has come about in that area. When you look at the paintings, which were not visible earlier, you will see that a new treatment has been given to them by further optic lights; these are cool lights. They have all been conserved. And those of you who do not have the time to go to Ajanta Ellora, can come to the back of the Red Fort and see what transformation has taken place during the last two or three months. When wc are taking up a particular area, we are attending to the problem in its totality, not looking at just one aspect. We see to it that all the facilities, say, drinking water, sanitation, parking, vehicular movements, and even medical aids including oxygen facilities are provided at what we call reception-cum-documentation-cum interpretation centres. All kinds of

information, all the books, will be available there. So, this is an integrated approach which will take care of it. As regards the area that you have mentioned, we are already working on several places in Goa and Maharashtra.

SHRIDIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Sir, coming back to the main question, which is 'visa-on-arrival' scheme, as the hon. Minister may be aware, the Standing Committee on Transport and Tourism had also strongly recommended, in its Report on the Demands for Grants last year, that this should be expedited. 1 understand, you have said, it is because of the security environment that this can't be looked into. Sir, I believe, for Mumbai and Delhi, this scheme is being introduced for a limited number of nationalities. So, supplementing what Mr. Reddy has been saying, I would like to know—this is part (a) of my supplementary—whether the Ministry will try—I want Mr. Jagmohan's influence, his own personal touch, on it—to extend this limited number of nationalities further. What is the exact number of nationalities? How many tourists are going to be covered by this? I would like to have the specific figures. And, part (b) of my supplementary is: Why is it that it has been introduced only at Mumbai and Delhi? I feel, Kolkata and Chennai should not have been forgotten. So, I would like to know whether the Minister would kindly reconsider this and introduce it in all the four metropolitan cities. This, I think, will give more justice to all of us.

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Sir, 1 have, in a sense, answered this question. This scheme was introduced, as an experimental measure, in the two cities of Mumbai and Delhi. Ultimately, we will take it to Kolkata also; we will take it to other cities also. It is only as an experimental measure that we said that they should do it in two days. *(Interruptions)* Yes, we will take it to the other two metropolitan cities also, if necessary. The only point is that there has to be security clearance. About 90 per cent of the arrivals from outside are in these two cities. Therefore, we chose them as experimental stations. But we will certainly take them to Kolkata.

ग्रंथालय विकास योजना के तहत छत्तीसगढ़ को अनुदान

*682. **श्री मोतीलाल वाहरा**: क्या पर्यटन ओर संस्कृति मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या सरकार को छत्तीसगढ़ सरकार से ग्रंथालय विकास योजना के तहत राज्य-स्तरीय ग्रंथालय के लिए अतिरिक्त अनुदान हुतु कोई मांग प्राप्त हुई है :